

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

Second Quarter 2024: *The Great Controversy*

Lesson 9 “The Foundation of God’s Government”

Read for this week’s study

Revelation 14:6–12; Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14; Proverbs 28:9; Daniel 7:25.

Memory Text

“And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Revelation 12:17, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. The Sanctuary and the Law
- III. The Immutability of God’s Law
- IV. The Sabbath and the Law
- V. The Mark of the Beast
- VI. The Three Angels’ Messages
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. “The aim of this lesson is to show the link between the sanctuary, God’s law, the Sabbath, and the coming crisis over the mark of the beast. We will also explore the relevance of the Sabbath to an end-time generation.” (Sabbath afternoon)
2. What is the significance of the fact that God’s law was kept in the Ark of the Covenant in the Most Holy Place of the sanctuary (Revelation 11:19; 12:17; Exodus 25:16; 31:18)? (Sunday’s lesson) What role does giving the law at Sinai play in the Biblical storyline? What happened before and afterwards?
3. Monday’s lesson connects the immutability of God’s law (Matthew 5:17, 18; Psalm 111:7, 8; Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14; 1 John 5:3; and Proverbs 28:9) with the close connection between God’s law and God’s character (Exodus 34:5–7; Romans 7:11, 12; Psalm 19:7–11; 89:14; 119:142, 172). Why is this important to emphasize? What

are the similarities and differences in how God's law is perceived, comparing the general attitudes of the 19th century society and today?

4. Tuesday's lesson connects the Sabbath and the law, noting: "the Sabbath is a symbol of rest, not of works; of grace, not of legalism; of assurance, not of condemnation; of depending upon God for salvation, and not on ourselves." If this is the case, why has it taken so long for many Adventists to realize this, even to the extent of bitter opposition to the message of righteousness by faith in Minneapolis in 1888? Why have so many in each generation been damaged by fruitless efforts to be saved by their works, seeking assurance of salvation yet feeling burdened by a condemnation of not being good (sanctified) enough? Added to the confusion are the repeated accusations of legalism by many fellow Christians.
5. One of the most thought-provoking books published by an Adventist in the last 50 years is Sigve Tonstad's "*The Lost Meaning of the Seventh Day*" (2009). Why is it important, as with all of God's commands, that the Sabbath is not viewed simply as some kind of rule that must be kept? Where can we see evidence of what that attitude creates? Jesus taught us that the importance is in the spirit of the law. How can we show the character of God in His Sabbath? Is it possible to preach the Sabbath in such a way that the character of Satan shines through?
6. Wednesday's lesson deals with the mark of the beast and Thursday's lesson with the three angels' messages. Why is the "mark of the beast" placed either in the forehead or the hand, while the "seal of God" is placed only on the forehead? (3:12; 7:2-3; 22:4)
7. Seen through the prism of God's character, the Sabbath is a sign of God's *commitment* more than it is a divine *commandment*. God's commitment is the primary Biblical meaning in the creation story.
8. When preaching the third angel's message, how can we express it in a positive and motivating context, rather than denouncing people?
9. Because the divine command was *misrepresented* before it was *violated* (Genesis 2:17-3:4; Romans 7:7-13), God's way of making things right must address the misrepresentation and not only the violation.
10. In our time and culture, how can we model to the world in a positive way what Sabbath, God's law, His character, and putting things right represent?

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

For example, in the narrow view, now lest that sound disrespectful and unrealistic, by the narrow view I mean the view that is preoccupied with what God has done for you and me. And that might be perfectly understandable in the lives of some of us. We still even have our tents pitched at the foot of Sinai. We have no right to tell anybody where he should have his tent pitched. But in the narrower view that is preoccupied with our own salvation, consistently the seventh-day Sabbath is presented as a mere test of obedience. I've read it again several times of late. But in the larger view, in the setting of the great controversy over the character of God, the Sabbath is God's gift to us, to remind us of the answers in the Great Controversy. To remind us of all the things He revealed about Himself, and about freedom, and about His unselfishness in the Garden of Eden. How He even shared His creative power with us, and enabled us to create little people in our own image.

Magnificent was the revelation given during creation week, and the Sabbath was given to remind us of those truths. But then when we lost our freedom, and God gave it back to us again, He says in the other version of the Ten Commandments, which has just as much authority as the Exodus one, the Sabbath was given to remind us of how God rescued us from Egyptian bondage. Sabbath is a monument to freedom. And then at the end of crucifixion week, when the ultimate questions about God were answered by the way Jesus suffered and died, the next day was seventh-day Sabbath, and the whole universe paused, earth time, to think and to remember and to celebrate the answer that God gave. The Sabbath is even described in the Bible as a type and a foretaste of the final rest to come. Instead of the Sabbath being a mere test of obedience, it becomes a great aid to us, and a time of celebration of the truth that is the basis of our trust, and the basis of our freedom. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Larger View*, #1, recorded October 1982, Monterey, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:* <http://pkp.cc/1MMLVIEW>

Once again they saw him dying. And he died so quickly! He didn't die of crucifixion. The soldiers were surprised to find He was already dead. They thrust the spear in for confirmation. He was dead!

You usually don't die that quickly. That's why they come and break legs. They didn't need to break His. He was already dead. And the universe watched Him go through it twice. Once again He was given up by the Father. And He knew He was. What did He cry as He died? "Why are You torturing Me to death?" No, "Why have You given Me up?" "Why have You forsaken Me?" And He died of a broken heart, apparently separated from His Father.

But He also was tortured. Who tortured Him to death? The most devout group of seventh-day Sabbath-keeping, tithe-paying, health-reforming, Bible-quoting Adventists the world has ever known. They did not know God. Remember Amos, and Hosea, and Micah, and Isaiah, and Jeremiah? They all talked about this, obeying God without knowing Him can actually turn us into His enemies. And it had to be underscored that they were absolutely dedicated to obedience. Jesus kept commenting on it. “You tithe mint, anise, and cumin. You strain out gnats from your goat’s milk. You search the scriptures,” He kept telling them.

And then, after they had tortured Him to death, what was their next concern? To get home in time for sundown worship! For you see, it was the Sabbath, and we are God’s true people! And what’s the mark that we are God’s true people? The keeping of the seventh-day Sabbath. But they kept it as an arbitrary requirement. And I would warn us, that if we keep the Sabbath just because we’re told to, just as a sign, instead of protecting us in the time of trouble, it could leave us vulnerable because it says the wrong thing about God. And our very Sabbath-keeping, if it’s for the wrong reason, could leave us open to the deceptions of the adversary, and we prefer the wrong Christ when he comes. Merely to keep the seventh day does not mean we’ll accept Christ when He comes, because the folk who rejected Him were the most devout Sabbath-keepers you ever saw. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Luke, recorded April 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/55MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/56MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Isn’t it significant that after all the answers during creation week, the next day was a rest day, for reflection and celebration? And after all the answers given during crucifixion week, the next day was a rest day, a day for reflection, for remembering, for celebration. **To me, that’s the whole purpose of the Sabbath. The Sabbath is designed to remind us of the truth about God that is the basis of our trust.** It’s not a test of obedience. It’s not a burden; it’s been made one. It was given to man. Remember Mark 2:27? “And he said to them, ‘The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath; so the Son of man is lord even of the Sabbath.’” The Sabbath was made for us, to help us, because more than at any other time we need to be reminded of the truth that was not claimed, but revealed and demonstrated during creation week, and during crucifixion week.

Incidentally, was that first Sabbath our seventh day? It was our second day. Sometimes we say we should worship every seventh day because it’s built into our system that we need to rest every seventh day. If that’s a good argument, then on which day should we rest? Which is our seventh day? Thursday! I don’t know anybody who chooses Thursday. Friday yes, Saturday yes,

Sunday yes. But this would start a whole new movement. If we're supposed to rest on the seventh day, our seventh day is Thursday. God's seventh day, with the universe watching, their seventh day, earth time, is the one that follows all those revealing events of creation week. That's when God and the universe celebrated. And then God says, "I want you to do the same from here on, not to be a burden and a test of obedience; you need this. The controversy is on; you need to be reminded once a week of the evidence I have presented, and there will be much more coming." {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in All 66 – Genesis, recorded October 1981, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

*Audio links to the West Covina series recorded in 1983:

<http://pkp.cc/1MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/2MMPOGIA66> (part 1)

Further Study with Ellen White

If man had kept the law of God, as given to Adam after his fall, preserved in the ark by Noah, and observed by Abraham, there would have been no necessity of the ordinance of circumcision. And if the descendants of Abraham had kept the covenant, which circumcision was a token or pledge of, they would never have gone into idolatry, and been suffered to go down into Egypt, and there would have been no necessity of God's proclaiming his law from Sinai, and engraving it upon tables of stone, and guarding it by definite directions in the judgments and statutes given to Moses. {3SG 299.2}

I saw a covering that God was drawing over His people to protect them in the time of trouble; and every soul that was decided on the truth and was pure in heart was to be covered with the covering of the Almighty. {EW 43.2}

Satan is ever at work endeavoring to pervert what God has spoken, to blind the mind and darken the understanding, and thus lead men into sin. This is why the Lord is so explicit, making His requirements so very plain that none need err. God is constantly seeking to draw men close under His protection, that Satan may not practice his cruel, deceptive power upon them. {PP 503.3}

Determined to efface the image of God in man, Satan works with an intensity of effort to hide God from view. Not openly does he work, but secretly, mingling the human and the divine, the spurious and the genuine, so seeking to bring confusion and distress. But in proportionate power divine mercy is revealed to counteract this wicked working, and bring to light the enemy's hidden purposes. {TDG 308.5}

God's forgiveness is not merely a judicial act by which He sets us free from condemnation. It is not only forgiveness *for* sin but reclaiming *from* sin. It is the outflow of redeeming love that transforms the heart. David had the true conception of forgiveness when he prayed, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." Psalm 51:10. {FLB 129.2}

There was but one hope for the human race—that into this mass of discordant and corrupting elements might be cast a new leaven; that there might be brought to mankind the power of a new life; that the knowledge of God might be restored to the world. {Ed 76.1}

Christ came to restore this knowledge. He came to set aside the false teaching by which those who claimed to know God had misrepresented Him. He came to manifest the nature of His law, to reveal in His own character the beauty of holiness. {Ed 76.2}

Christ came to the world with the accumulated love of eternity. Sweeping away the exactions which had encumbered the law of God, He showed that the law is a law of love, an expression of the Divine Goodness. He showed that in obedience to its principles is involved the happiness of mankind, and with it the stability, the very foundation and framework, of human society. {Ed 76.3}

But in heaven, service is not rendered in the spirit of legality. When Satan rebelled against the law of Jehovah, the thought that there was a law came to the angels almost as an awakening to something unthought of. In their ministry the angels are not as servants, but as sons. There is perfect unity between them and their Creator. Obedience is to them no drudgery. Love for God makes their service a joy. So in every soul wherein Christ, the hope of glory, dwells, His words are re-echoed, "I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart." Psalm 40:8. {MB 109.2}

Christ came as One able to expound the law of God, so long misunderstood and misinterpreted by priests and leaders. He tore away the gloomy framework of error and doubt, tradition and superstition, with which men had surrounded truth and obscured its brightness. Resetting the jewels of truth in the framework of God's law, He caused them to shine in their original, heavenly luster. He taught a religion entirely different from the religion taught by the Pharisees. He showed that true happiness springs from purity of heart. True religion is not a mere theory; it affects the heart, and is expressed in the life by good works. {ST, May 7, 1902 par. 8}

Heaven's law is always merciful, kind, tender, helpful, uplifting to others. {FLB 84.4}

The Sabbath is a sign of creative and redeeming power; it points to God as the source of life and knowledge; it recalls man's primeval glory, and thus witnesses to God's purpose to re-create us in His own image. {Ed 250.1}

The Sabbath and the family were alike instituted in Eden, and in God's purpose they are indissolubly linked together. On this day more than on any other, it is possible for us to live the life of Eden. . . . {Ed 250.2}

The Sabbath is a pledge given by God to man—a sign of the relation existing between the Creator and His created beings. {3SM 256.1}

When temptations and trials rush in upon us, let us go to God and agonize with Him in prayer. He will not turn us away empty, but will give us grace and strength to overcome, and to break the power of the enemy. {EW 46.2}

God knows how Satan is working, and sends his angels to watch over his children, to protect them from the Devil's power. {2SG 277.2}

The teaching of this parable [the sower] is illustrated in God's own dealing with men and angels. Satan is a deceiver. When he sinned in heaven, even the loyal angels did not fully discern his character. This was why God did not at once destroy him. Had He done so, the holy angels would not have perceived the justice and love of God. A doubt of God's goodness would have been as evil seed that would yield the bitter fruit of sin and woe. Therefore the author of evil was spared, fully to develop his character. {UL 77.5}

The government of God is not, as Satan would make it appear, founded upon a blind submission, an unreasoning control. It appeals to the intellect and the conscience. "Come now, and let us reason together" is the Creator's invitation to the beings He has made. Isaiah 1:18. God does not force the will of His creatures. He cannot accept an homage that is not willingly and intelligently given. A mere forced submission would prevent all real development of mind or character; it would make man a mere automaton. Such is not the purpose of the Creator. He desires that man, the crowning work of His creative power, shall reach the highest possible development. He sets before us the height of blessing to which He desires to bring us through His grace. He invites us to give ourselves to Him, that He may work His will in us. It remains for us to choose whether we will be set free from the bondage of sin, to share the glorious liberty of the sons of God. {SC 43.4}

God's ideal for His children is higher than the highest human thought can reach. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." This command is a promise. The plan of redemption contemplates our complete recovery from the power of Satan. . . . {DA 311.2}

The seal of the living God will be placed upon those only who bear a likeness to Christ in character. {FLB 287.2}

It is obedience to the principles of the commandments of God, that molds the character after the divine similitude. {FLB 287.4}